

California Department of Education
Jack O’Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction



**Elementary Education
Newsletter**

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Dear Colleagues:

As we begin another year, the educational community faces tremendous challenges. You have posted some impressive achievements during the past year, and I have greatly appreciated your efforts on behalf of our students. I want you to know that I will continue to fight to ensure that our public education system receives the support that it deserves. Our state cannot afford to renege on its commitment to our children.

In December I announced that I am establishing a new statewide council to better coordinate education in California, from preschool through college. The council will be charged with examining ways to improve student achievement at all levels and link preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and higher education to create a comprehensive, integrated system of student learning. Providing all of this state’s children with the academic foundation they need to navigate tomorrow’s world is the basis for the work of this council.

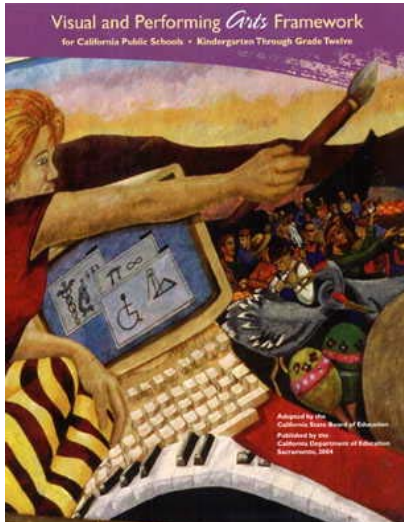
This winter issue of the *Elementary Education Newsletter* addresses issues – ranging from arts and reading education to program improvement – that are of interest to elementary educators. I hope you find them helpful.

Thank you for all your hard work.

JACK O’CONNELL

Visual and Performing Arts Framework

The California Department of Education recently published the new *Visual and Performing Arts (VPA)*



Framework. The *VPA Framework* is aligned with the visual and performing arts content standards that were adopted by the California State Board of Education in 2001. The standards address the disciplines of dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts and are intended to provide important guidance to schools in designing curricula for these subject areas. The VPA content standards are available at the Department Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>. The new framework is a blueprint for putting the content standards into practice. Administrators and teachers may use it as a tool in designing and implementing quality arts programs. The framework describes the skills, knowledge, and abilities that all students should be able to master from prekindergarten to grade twelve in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts.

The Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources (CFIR) Division at the Department has developed a CD-ROM to be included with each *VPA Framework*. The CD-ROM contains images of original artwork from California museums that may encourage teachers to extend learning opportunities and

motivate their students to learn more about art in their own communities. The images of artwork contained on the CD-ROM represent pictures of art in a wide variety of museums and represent many different styles as well. The pictures of art include works created by artists that portray California and its history as well as classical pieces that highlight new trends in the visual arts. The intent of the CD-ROM is to provide teachers and students with a few examples of visual resources that will supplement the *VPA Framework* and encourage teachers and students to visit nearby museums to see the original artwork. There are 24 California museums represented on the CD-ROM as well as images, links, and information about Italian street painting festivals; images of the *VPA Framework* cover mural; links to 30 additional museums; an index of artists; and an index of the selection of pictures. The CFIR Division will coordinate the adoption of instructional materials for visual and performing arts in 2006. Instructional materials will be submitted to the state from publishers, reviewed by Instructional Materials Advisory Panel members from July through August 2006, and submitted for action by the State Board in November 2006. The new *VPA Framework* may be obtained from CDE Press for \$19.95. Contact the Sales Unit at (800) 995-4099 or (916) 445-1260 or visit the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/orderinfo.asp>.

Upcoming Textbook Adoptions

The primary adoption of history–social science instructional materials and resources will be completed by November 2005. The CFIR Division will also continue working on the adoption of instructional materials in science in 2005 and start the adoption process for instructional materials in mathematics beginning in May 2005.

Instructional materials and resources that are submitted by publishers and adopted by the State Board of Education are available for viewing and review at Learning Resource Display Centers (LRDCs) across the state. From this link, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/lrdc.asp>, you can find an LRDC near you.



Reading First Program

The Reading First program was established by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which was signed into law on January 8, 2002. The purpose of the Reading First program is to provide support for states and districts to use scientifically based reading research as well as instructional and assessment tools proven to be effective to improve reading in kindergarten through third (K–3) grades. The goal is to ensure that all children will learn to read by the end of third grade. Reading First provides funds to train teachers in the essential components of an effective reading program. For students to achieve proficiency in reading, they must receive instruction in the following five areas:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Vocabulary development
- Reading fluency, including oral reading skills
- Reading comprehension strategies

California was the eighth state in the nation to gain approval to implement its Reading First Plan. Thus far, school districts in California have had three opportunities to obtain funding to participate in the program. To participate, districts must incorporate the following three major components of the California Reading First Plan:

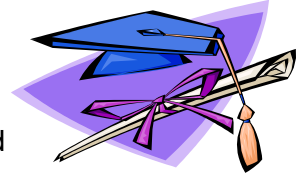
- Full implementation of scientific, research-based instructional programs as evidenced by use of the state's adopted instructional programs for reading/language arts
- Use of appropriate valid and reliable diagnostic, screening, and classroom-based instructional assessments
- Ongoing professional development programs for all teachers and site administrators participating in Reading First

California's Reading First program currently has 13 local educational agencies (LEAs) with 326 schools serving approximately 183,000 students in grades K–3 in round 1; 60 LEAs with 354 schools serving approximately 140,000 students in grades K–3 in round 2; and 38 LEAs with 139 schools serving approximately 59,060 students in grades K–3 in round 3.

Each Reading First LEA Plan provides for three years of professional development beginning with 40 hours of intensive institute-style training and 80 hours of follow-up practicum in the first year. An approved State Board of Education (SBE) training provider must be used to deliver the initial professional development training. The professional development is tied directly to the SBE-adopted instructional materials used by the teachers in their classrooms. Future funding opportunities for the Reading First program grant awards are pending approval.

The scientific, research-based instructional materials programs that are used in Reading First schools are *Houghton Mifflin Reading: A Legacy of Literacy 2003* and *SRA/McGraw-Hill Open Court Reading 2002*. Reading First schools by definition focus on the use of scientifically based research and have demonstrated that student achievement in reading improves when (1) the state-adopted instructional program is fully implemented; and (2) the teachers and principals receive ongoing professional development on the standards-aligned instructional materials that they use in the classroom on a daily basis. The evaluation results of the Reading First program will be available later this year.

2004 Achieving Schools Awards



The Academic Achievement Awards program is a national program that was authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 to honor high-achieving Title I schools. California has participated in this program for the past 20 years. Schools are required to present documentation of significant growth in reading/language arts and mathematics over a two-year period to qualify for the award.

Last year 214 elementary, middle, high, and charter schools were selected to receive California's Title I Academic Achievement Award. Of these, 197 were elementary schools. All schools eligible to receive the Academic Achievement Award were required to meet the following general criteria:

1. The school is considered high poverty according to the poverty index. The percentage of students eligible to receive free or reduced-priced meals, or who come from families who qualify for California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids (CALWORKS) (formerly AFDC), must be equal to 40 percent of all students enrolled, not just those tested.
2. The school had Academic Performance Index (API) scores for both 2001-02 and 2002-03 as well as data on adequate yearly progress (AYP) for those two school years. Each school must have two years of assessment data for school years 2001-02 and 2002-03 in the state accountability system for growth results to be calculated for the API. The school must demonstrate the achievement level of *twice* the schoolwide API growth target and *twice* the API growth target for the socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroup for school years 2001-02 and 2002-03 and must have made AYP, as calculated by the California Department of Education (CDE) and defined under NCLB for 2001-02 and 2002-03.
3. The school had attained at least the following median 2004 API growth score:

Elementary Schools 733

Middle Schools 697

High Schools 672

Last year two of the elementary schools that received an Academic Achievement Award also received national awards. Evergreen Elementary School in the Evergreen Union Elementary School District located in Tehama County and Elysian Heights Elementary School in the Los Angeles Unified School District were awarded national recognition at a ceremony held on February 9, 2004, in New Orleans during the National NCLB Title I Conference.

Evergreen Elementary School was recognized for achieving the highest score in reading and mathematics of all California Title I schools and for making the most progress toward closing the achievement gap among all groups in the school. Evergreen Elementary School staff stated that the greatest factors that contributed to the success of their students was the school's commitment to high standards and the expertise of the teachers and support staff. School staff also attributed teamwork, communication, and outreach to families as the primary ingredients to the school's success.

Elysian Heights Elementary School was recognized for attaining the highest growth rate of all Title I schools in the state. Elysian Heights Elementary School staff members indicated that one of the greatest contributing factors that led to their school's success was that they had a shared vision based on the Principles of Learning, which is a standards-based program that was implemented at the school. The Principles of Learning program was developed under the direction of Lauren B. Resnick, Institute for Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh. Additional information about the Principles of Learning program may be obtained at <http://alan.lrdc.pitt.edu/lrdc/>. The second greatest factor that contributed to the school's success was staff members' acknowledgment that change can be a difficult process and takes time. They believed in achievement for all students; a system of accountability was in place; and all members of the school community had a spirit of collaboration.

Library News



National Library Week 2005

Celebrate National Library Week 2005 from April 10 to 16, 2005.

The theme for 2005 is "Something for Everyone at Your Library." For graphics, proclamations, promotional ideas, and more, visit the American Library Association Web site at <http://www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/nlw/nationallibraryweek.htm>.

School Libraries Work!

School Libraries Work!, a new research paper from Scholastic, confirms that school libraries are critical to student achievement. Findings in the research paper indicate that when school libraries contain strong collections, act as a curriculum partner, and are staffed with credentialed library media teachers, students score higher on standardized tests across all grade levels regardless of socioeconomic or educational levels.

The research paper highlights findings from studies conducted in 14 states since 1999, as well as the 2004 Ohio study (Todd, Ross J., and Carol C. Kuhlthau. *Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries: The Ohio Research Study*. Ohio Educational Library Media Association, 2004). The research study is available online at <http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning/default.asp>. The collective findings are especially relevant in these times when school administrators are forced to validate the need for school libraries and their measurable impact on student learning.

A downloadable version is available at http://www.scholasticlibrary.org/librarians/printables/slp_rfp_804.pdf

Profile of a School Librarian

How does she manage it all? Wendy Chason, serves a dual role as the library media teacher at Patwin Elementary School and at Holmes Junior High School in the Davis Unified School District. Additionally, Chason is an instructor in the library services program at California State University, Sacramento. In her overlapping roles as teacher, information specialist, and instructional partner, she has served on conference committees of the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) and presented at section meetings and at state conferences. As a program administrator, Chason provides staff development training at all levels of learning and was the first library media teacher to be recognized as a mentor teacher in her district. In addition, Chason received her district's outstanding teacher award and was the 2003 recipient of the California School Library Association President's Award. Currently, she is planning the remodel of her junior high school library as well as coordinating plans for a new junior high school library in her district.

"Wendy's enthusiasm for reading is absolutely contagious," says Kate Bowen, sixth-grade teacher at Patwin Elementary School. She enthusiastically promotes reading not only to her students but also co-chairs a teacher book-discussion group for her district. Karen Moore, social studies teacher at Holmes Junior High School states, "Her leadership has made the Holmes library a hub for many students' learning and for many teachers' teaching."

Chason's amazing level of outreach to her students, fellow teachers, and community make her a true collaborator and role model for librarians.

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Profile of a School Librarian – Continued

This item appeared first in *Good Ideas! Compelling Ideas for Administrators, Teachers, the PTA and the School Board*, Fall 2003, a publication of the California School Library Association. It is adopted and reprinted with permission of the California School Library Association. Strong California school library programs are featured online in the newsletter *Good Ideas!* at <http://www.schoollibrary.org/pub/goodideas.htm>.

**Districts Enter NCLB Program Improvement**

Fourteen California school districts entered uncharted waters this fall, as, for the first time, they were designated **districts** in Program Improvement (PI). This article identifies some requirements for districts faced with this designation and some tools available to help them improve. The newly identified districts must expeditiously put into place those resources and structures that will improve student achievement, particularly the achievement of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Thus, it is important that these districts, as well as the hundreds who are “at risk,” take action that is strategic, supportive of academic improvement at the school level, and aligned across grade levels and schools in order to foster coherent school improvement.

Background. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires districts to provide special support for their Title I schools that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more years. There are currently more than 1600 California schools at various stages of local intervention under PI.

Additional provisions under NCLB require the state to identify PI **districts**. In September 2004, 14 districts were notified of their status as PI districts. See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/> for the criteria adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2004 for a school district to be designated as PI. Identified districts have each been funded to work with an external organization to:

- Notify parents of the PI status and involve them in making district improvements.

- Conduct an analysis of the presence or absence of identified school and district components for instructional success.
- Revise and implement their Local Educational Agency Plan.
- Dedicate a dollar amount for professional development of teachers and other staff.

Using state tools and resources, districts will make districtwide changes to improve student achievement. In addition, a new state law AB 2066/Steinberg, (Chapter No. 579, Statutes of 2004) authorizes a series of stages to help districts avoid the decline to PI status. A PI Prevention Program and an Early Warning initiative will put districts on notice about the importance of making districtwide improvements to avoid placement in PI status. PI Prevention districts may choose to obtain funds to help with the implementation processes.

Opportunity for District Support of School Improvement. As noted above, districts are the key to effecting change at schools. Schools and districts need not wait until they are subject to state or federal intervention before addressing issues of low student achievement. Districts should begin now to ensure coherence across school and district programs and collaborate with the schools in giving the highest priority to an aligned curriculum, instruction, professional development, and assessment rather than other initiatives.

Districts that are in any of the stages of PI identification are encouraged to use state tools and work with their local county office to help speed

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Districts Enter NCLB Program Improvement – Continued

school improvement. Readers of the *Elementary Education Newsletter* should consider logging onto <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl> to access the Elementary Academic Program Survey that measures a school's implementation of nine components considered essential to instructional success. To obtain an online copy of a draft tool to assess district support for underperforming schools, e-mail Jonathan Mortimer at jmortime@cde.ca.gov and request a copy of the District Assistance

Survey. Both tools have proven initially useful in helping districts and schools focus on the curricular, instructional, and professional development issues essential for instructional improvement. Questions about either of these tools or the technical assistance available to support PI districts should be e-mailed to Laura Wagner at lwagner@cde.ca.gov.

Addressing Disproportionality: From Planning to Action

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) and the California Department of Education hosted a two-day technical assistance meeting during fall 2004. This meeting was held for educators representing special education and general education from school districts serving K–12 students, colleges and universities, Department personnel, county office of education personnel, parents, and community agencies. The purpose of the meeting was to provide professional development to introduce strategies to work on reducing issues about disproportionality. Disproportionality has been defined as, “The extent to which membership in a given group affects the probability of being placed in a specific special education disability category”.¹ For example, during the 2003-04 school year, 11 percent of all students in California received special education services. For African American students this figure was 16 percent, which indicates disproportionate representation in special education for those students.²

The NCCRESt has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), to provide technical assistance to states as they work on reducing incidences of disproportionality. This is the center's second year of work to focus on the over- and underrepresentation of minority students in special education. The NCCRESt has also focused on increasing the use of prevention and early intervention strategies to help to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. Staff members from the NCCRESt have a goal to meet with every state to offer technical assistance in developing plans to address disproportionality. In 1997 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required states to collect and examine data on disproportionality. The IDEA regulations further specify that if significant disproportionality occurs, the states must develop a plan for addressing the problem.

The purpose of the NCCRESt meeting in fall 2004 was to address ways to close the achievement gap between students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their peers and to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to special education. Participants were asked to focus on how issues of minority disproportionality could be handled and were provided with information to achieve the following outcomes:

- To increase awareness and build shared understanding of the complexities that contribute to disproportionality
- To understand state and local contextual issues and learn about approaches being implemented
- To engage in discussions about the need for technical assistance and the resources available

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¹Oswald, D.P., Coutinho, M.J., Best, A.M., & Singh, N.N. (1999). Ethnic Representation in Special Education, *Journal of Special Education*, 32, 194-206.

²Source: California Special Education Management Information System, 2003-04.

Addressing Disproportionality: From Planning to Action – Continued

Results of the work to reduce incidences of disproportionality will extend the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. To obtain additional information about the work at NCCRESt, visit the Web site at <http://www.nccrest.org>. Contact Kimberly McDaniel of the CDE by telephone at (916) 322-3254 or by e-mail at kmcdanie@cde.ca.gov.

Calendar of Events

January 21–23, 2005

California Teachers Association
Good Teaching 54th Annual Conference
Marriott Hotel at San Francisco Airport, Burlingame, CA
Marlene Fong, mfong@cta.org (951) 372-2505

March 4–6, 2005

California Association for the Education of Young Children
Annual Conference 2005
Convention Center, Sacramento, CA
Sharon Stone Smith, ssmith@caeyc.org, (916) 486-7750

Resources

For information regarding student assessment, access the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/documents/notes0404all.pdf>.

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